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NEAR EAST/AFRICA BRANCH

INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

For Week Ending  
26 May 1948

Vol. III No. 20

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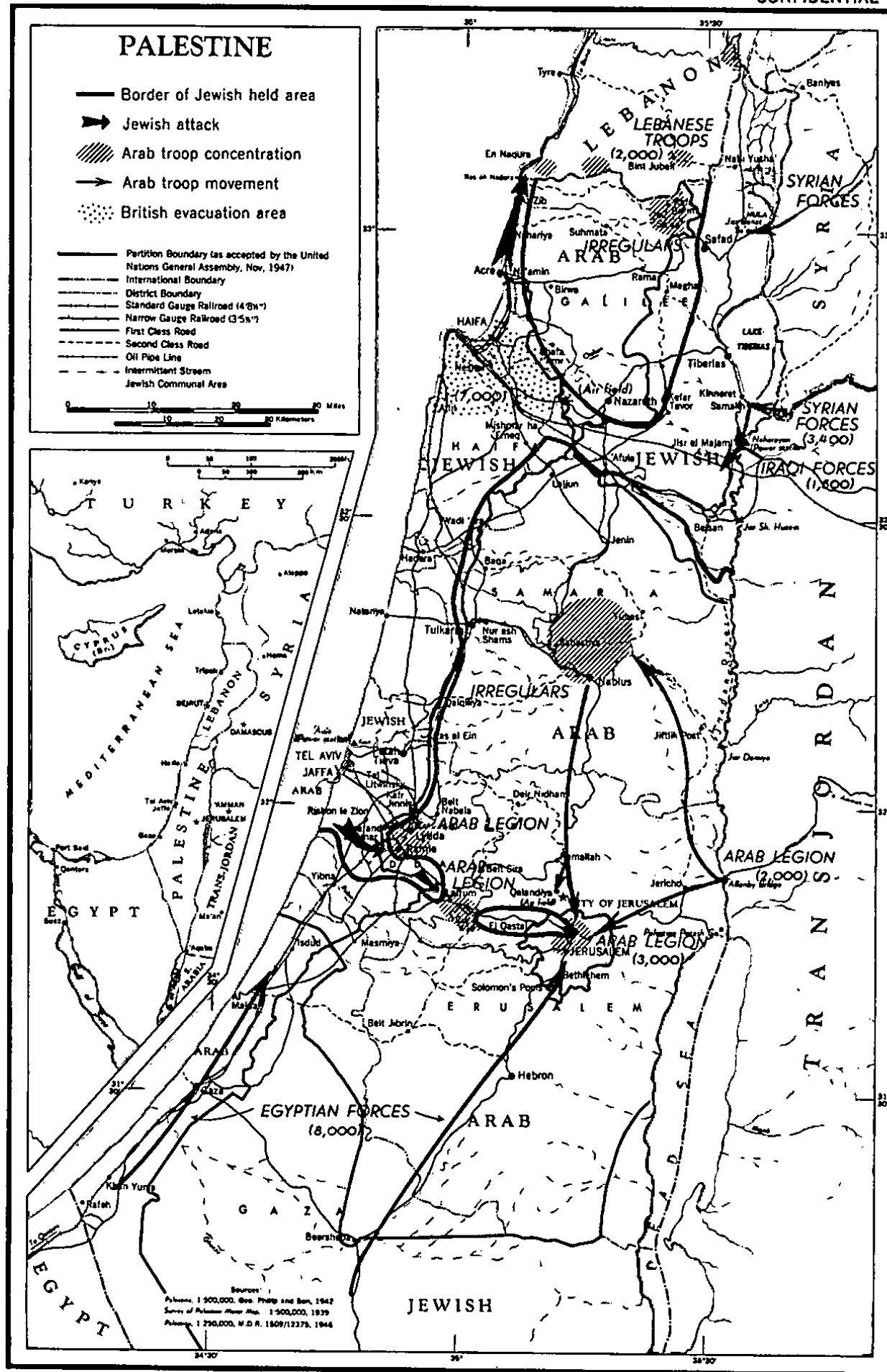
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## NEAR EAST/AFRICA BRANCH

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## INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

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## GENERAL

The situation in Palestine: Arab rejection of the UN "cease-fire" order is further indication that the Arabs still cannot be brought to accept a Jewish state in Palestine. The war is popular in the Arab states and has relieved domestic pressure. It has also been a strong unifying force among the Arab leaders, whose own convictions on Palestine have been fortified by the realization that if they were to give up the fight, even at the behest of the UN, the Arab peoples would turn against them and demand that the war be carried on. Consequently, their determination to continue the fight--in defiance of the UN, the US, and the UK--is not likely to weaken. If the Jews are strongly supported with arms shipments from the US and immigrants from Europe, the Arab campaign will almost certainly be unsuccessful, and the stability of the Arab governments will be endangered. Ensuing chaos and the disappearance of US and UK influence in the area will leave the Arab world vulnerable to Soviet exploitation.

There has been little change in the military situation in Palestine since last week. In the crucial battle for Jerusalem, the Arab Legion has captured most of the Old City and is currently exerting great pressure on the remaining Jewish forces. In the New City, where the main Hagana forces are strongly entrenched, the Arab Legion is pressing the attack from all sides and has succeeded in cutting the supply road to Tel Aviv, which is blocked at Bab el Wad and at Latrun by another Arab force. Egyptian troops have advanced northward slightly beyond Majdal on the coast; another Egyptian force has passed north through Hebron and has reportedly linked up with the Arab Legion beyond Bethlehem. Except for Transjordan and Egypt, the Arab states have done little militarily. Iraqi and Syrian troops appear unable to advance beyond the southern tip of Lake Tiberias. Lebanese troops are on the frontier and seem in no hurry to take the offensive. Saudi Arabia has sent only token troops to join the Egyptian forces.

Jerusalem remains the key to the situation for both sides. Unless Hagana can hold the Jewish sections of the city and simultaneously reopen the supply route from Tel Aviv, Israel will suffer the loss of a large Zionist population and considerable prestige. Moreover, if the Arab Legion can win a decisive victory there, it will be free to

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reinforce the Syrians and Iraqi in Eastern Galilee. The combined Arab forces consequently might be able to achieve further successes before Hagana could be reinforced with arms and men from abroad.

## GREECE

The UNSCOB morale problem: The work of the UN's Special Committee on the Balkans (UNSCOB) has been seriously handicapped by the personal dissatisfaction of many members over their uninspiring living conditions and relative isolation in Salonika. Part of the group has already gone to Geneva to draft UNSCOB's initial report to the UN, and it has been suggested that the other members join them there for the necessary discussions of the document. Meanwhile attempts are being made to transfer the permanent headquarters of UNSCOB from Salonika to the more cosmopolitan atmosphere of Athens, on the ground that UNSCOB, having been unable to effect a reconciliation between Greece and its northern neighbors, is no longer needed on the spot and can receive the reports of its observer teams just as well in Athens as in Salonika. If the headquarters is moved back to Athens, however, Greek morale will suffer and UNSCOB will lose prestige and effectiveness.

## TURKEY

Alarm over Palestine: While the Turks are increasingly concerned over Palestine, they have no intention of intervening in the matter. They have hitherto remained aloof so far as possible, not wishing to become involved in the struggle and yet apprehensive lest their passivity offend their Arab neighbors and co-religionists. Thus Turkey voted against the partition of Palestine in order to avoid the strategic isolation which might have resulted from aroused enmities south of the Turkish border. At the same time, efforts were made to persuade Arab leaders to avoid bloodshed and to strive for an understanding with the Jews. Now, however, the Turks feel that the situation has worsened to such an extent that Soviet-Communist influence cannot be prevented from spreading in the area. They believe that already, by infiltration or other methods, Soviet agents are active in Palestine. They foresee the dreaded possibility of the entry of Soviet troops as well. Such thoughts undoubtedly underlay the Turkish Foreign Minister's renewed plea last week for a settlement in Palestine, and for peace in the Middle East. Significantly, however, he asked for a lasting solution which would leave "the Arabs masters of their rights."

## YEMEN

Love finds a way (or R.H.I.P. in the High Yemen): The romances of royalty tend to have a cut-and-dried quality in Europe except (as

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with the Duke of Windsor) when infringement of the rules causes an explosion. Not so, however, in the High Yemen. A few years ago a 15-year old girl, born in the UK of a Yemeni father and an English mother, came to Yemen. Crown Prince Ahmed sought her hand in marriage but was rebuffed; instead her parents gave her to a cousin, as befits Arab custom. Ahmed went back to his anomalous existence as heir apparent to a crotchety, absolute monarch. Then in February 1948 the Imam Yahya was murdered; Ahmed went to battle against the usurping Wazir, and in due course became Imam. Affairs of state did not make him forget the girl, however. Promptly, he issued a command, which the girl, her parents, and her husband dared not refuse. As a result, Ahmed, 56 years old and already possessed of several wives, is once again a bridegroom.

#### IRAN

New Soviet technique? Recent Soviet overtures to Iran suggest that the USSR, having failed to achieve any success through its series of threatening notes, may now turn to conciliatory techniques as a means of attaining its ends. Soviet representatives have voiced to Iranian officials both in Tehran and in Washington the desire of the USSR to reach an amicable settlement of the differences existing between the two countries. Concurrently the USSR, complying with an old Iranian request, has formally liquidated its holdings in Iransovtrans, a Soviet transport agency established in Iran during the war and long an irritant to Iran. By these tactics the Kremlin apparently hopes to "soften" the Iranian Government and to effect a reduction of US and UK influence in Iran. At the same time the USSR is giving strong support to the pro-Soviet Tudeh Party, a potentially powerful political instrument. This support includes both covert aid and an aggressive propaganda campaign aimed at the underprivileged of Iran. Although the present Iranian Government probably will not be beguiled by conciliatory approaches, its continued failure to implement essential economic and social reforms will provide the Tudeh Party with an opportunity greatly to increase its strength.

#### INDIA-PAKISTAN

Hyderabad tension mounts: An attack on the Bombay-Madras mail train as it passed through Hyderabad on 22 May has further heightened the friction between Hyderabad and the Government of India and has resulted in the hurried departure to New Delhi (at India's invitation) of Hyderabad's prime minister. India is not likely to take overt action to end Hyderabad's independence before the "standstill agreement" between India and Hyderabad expires on 15 November, particularly

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since the Hyderabad Government is reportedly willing to grant India some authority in Hyderabad affairs. Nevertheless, strong pressure from States Minister Patel and other ultra-nationalists may precipitate a showdown now.

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